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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 10 TOKYO 002639

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [EFIN](#) [ETRD](#) [SENV](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: ASO ELECTED PM; CABINET PICKS AIMED AT SOLIDIFYING LEADERSHIP

REF: TOKYO 2612

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer, reasons 1.4(b),(d).

Summary and Comment

¶1. (C) Former LDP Secretary General Taro Aso was elected Prime Minister of Japan on September 24, succeeding Yasuo Fukuda, who announced his intention to resign on September 1.

Aso announced his new Cabinet the same day, re-appointing just five of 17 ministers from the recently reshuffled Fukuda Cabinet and appointing the remainder primarily from among his close associates in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). The substantive credentials of Aso's new Cabinet appointments are fairly strong and reflect the need to go with serious, experienced hands at a time when the LDP may be fighting for its political life. Nearly all of the new ministers are well-known to the public and have held ministerial portfolios in the past. The roster includes a number of serious policy wonks. Most are also relatively conservative and low-key. Overall, the new ministers present an image of solid party unity behind Aso, in keeping with his landslide win in the LDP presidential campaign on September

¶22. Embassy contacts describe the new Cabinet as devoid of notable surprises, and one in which factional politics seemed to play little or no role. Aso left the LDP executive leadership slate intact, substituting Hiroyuki Hosoda into the position that he vacated when he became LDP President.

¶2. (C) Despite the individual strengths of Aso's personnel choices, however, some observers are already criticizing the new administration for placing a premium on close personal ties. Others note Aso has appointed a Cabinet with no "stars" that will follow his lead and offer minimal resistance. Choices such as Hosoda and Kawamura for the LDP Secretary General and Chief Cabinet Secretary slots are said to be a good indication of Aso's intent to appoint individuals that are not flashy, but will attend to domestic affairs. One Embassy press contact described the new ministers as the "Aso is THE Star" Cabinet, lamenting that Aso is determined to make all of the policy decisions by himself. The Cabinet selections, he noted, demonstrated the "narrow radius" of Aso's network within the LDP, with many key appointments, including Nakasone, Nakayama, Kawamura,

Yosano, and Hatoyama, coming from his colleagues in the "education policy tribe." Several of his new ministers also served in the Abe Cabinet, demonstrating the conservative nature of this Cabinet. The appointment of such an overwhelmingly pro-U.S. Cabinet could lead neighboring countries to question the direction of Japan's foreign policy, one Embassy contact claimed. In his press remarks introducing the new Cabinet, Aso called on his ministers to build a "bright and strong" Japan. He specified his instructions to new Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone to work on strengthening U.S.-Japan ties, fighting terror, and dealing with the DPRK.

13. (C) Initial press reports note Aso's team may not be a stellar cast to lead the LDP into what promises to be a very difficult Lower House election against Ichiro Ozawa and his Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). The critics argue that what Aso really needed to do was appoint a Cabinet that would boost public support, enabling the LDP and coalition junior partner Komeito to capitalize on the public's initial enthusiasm for Aso and call an early election. Some in the LDP believe that dissolving the Lower House within the next few weeks is the party's only hope for blunting the DPJ's ability to attack the ruling coalition in the Diet over the pension scandal, recent food safety scares, and a host of other issues. On the downside, however, an early election could also hamper Aso's ability to put in place an economic stimulus package aimed at winning the support of voters hurt by recent economic events. Some observers read the lack of

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unconventional appointments in the new Cabinet to mean that Aso has not decided which way to go on the timing of the economic stimulus package and dissolution of the Lower House, and is waiting to see how far his new administration can rise above the low support ratings of his immediate predecessor. Aso has indicated that he intends to wait for the results of the first round of public opinion polls on the new Cabinet before making any decisions. His Cabinet picks have led at least some observers to question whether he really intends to call an early election.

NEW CABINET LINEUP

14. (U) Following are the members of the new cabinet:

- Prime Minister: Taro Aso, LDP (replacing Yasuo Fukuda);
- Chief Cabinet Secretary and Minister of State for Abductions: Takeo Kawamura, LDP (replacing Nobutaka Machimura);
- Minister of Foreign Affairs: Hirofumi Nakasone, LDP (replacing Masahiko Koumura);
- Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Financial Services: Shoichi Nakagawa, LDP (replacing Bunmei Ibuki and Toshimitsu Motegi);
- Minister of Defense: Yasukazu Hamada, LDP (replacing Yoshimasa Hayashi);
- Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry: Toshihiro Nikai, LDP (unchanged);
- Minister of Justice: Eisuke Mori, LDP (replacing Okiharu Yasuoka);
- Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries: Shigeru Ishiba, LDP (replacing Seiichi Ota, who resigned on September 19);
- Minister of Land, Infrastructure, and Transportation,

Nariaki Nakayama, LDP (replacing Sadakazu Tanigaki);

-- Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications,
Decentralization, Regional Revitalization, and the Regional
Block System: Kunio Hatoyama, LDP (replacing Hiroya Masuda);

-- Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and
Technology: Eisuke Mori, LDP (replacing Tsuneo Suzuki)

-- Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare: Yoichi Masuzoe, LDP
(unchanged);

-- Minister of Environment, Minister in Charge of Global
Environmental Problems: Tetsuo Saito, New Komeito (unchanged);

-- National Public Safety Commission Chairman, Minister of
State for Okinawa and Northern Territories, and Disaster
Management: Tsutomu Sato, LDP (replacing Motoo Hayashi);

-- Minister of State for Economic and Fiscal Policy: Kaoru
Yosano, LDP (unchanged);

-- Minister of State for Administrative Reform, Regulatory
Reform, and Civil Service Reform: Akira Amari, LDP (replacing
Toshimitsu Motegi)

-- Minister of State for Science and Technology Policy,
Consumer Administration, and Food Safety: Seiko Noda, LDP
(unchanged);

-- Minister of State for Gender Equality, Declining
Birthrate, and Official Document Management: Yuko Obuchi, LDP

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(replacing Kyoko Nakayama).

LDP LEADERSHIP SLATE

15. (U) The following are the new leaders of the LDP:

-- President: Taro Aso (replacing Yasuo Fukuda);

-- Secretary General: Hiroyuki Hosoda (replacing Taro Aso,
moved to Prime Minister);

-- General Affairs Council Chairman: Takashi Sasagawa
(unchanged);

-- Policy Research Council Chairman: Kosuke Hori (unchanged);

-- Election Strategy Council Chairman: Makoto Koga
(unchanged.)

BIO INFO FOR NEW MINISTERS

16. (C) PRIME MINISTER: Taro ASO, 68, a nine-term Lower House member representing Fukuoka 8 district, was born in Fukuoka on September 20, 1940 and has a strong political pedigree. The grandson of former Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida and the son-in-law of former Prime Minister Zenko Suzuki, he is also the brother-in-law of Prince Tomohito, a cousin of the current Emperor. He was elected to the post of LDP President on September 22, on his fourth try, and has led his own small faction within the LDP since 2007. After graduating from Gakushuin University in 1963, Aso worked for approximately 15 years for his family's Aso Cement Company, the last six as President and CEO. During that time, he competed in the 1976 Montreal Olympics. First elected to the Diet in 1979, he has served as Director General of the Economic Planning Agency, State Minister for Economic and Fiscal Planning, Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications, and Foreign Minister. In addition to the Secretary General job, which he has held

on two occasions, he has also served as LDP policy chief. The generally conservative, hawkish Aso is both widely liked and widely disliked within the LDP, and is well known for his many verbal gaffes over the years. A strong supporter of the U.S.-Japan Alliance, he is expected to continue the foreign policy course set by his immediate predecessors.

¶7. (C) CHIEF CABINET SECRETARY: Takeo KAWAMURA, 67, is a six-term Lower House member representing Yamaguchi 3 district. Kawamura is a member of the Ibuki faction. His appointment comes as a something of a surprise, but he is said to be close to Aso from their work on education policy. First elected in 1990, he has held a wide variety of party posts related to education, culminating in his appointment as Education Minister in 2003. A notable exception was his service as Director of the Special Committee on Prevention of International Terrorism and Japan's Cooperation and Support in October 2001. Graduating from Keio University's Faculty of Business and Commerce in 1967, Kawamura embarked on a nearly ten-year career in the oil industry, and this background in business is another point of commonality with Aso. One LDP member described Kawamura as a "nice guy" and said that he gets along with everyone in the party. Kawamura's English ability is unknown.

¶8. (C) MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS: Hirofumi NAKASONE, 63, is a fourth-term Upper House member representing Gunma Prefecture, elected for the first time in 1986. He is a member of the Ibuki faction. Nakasone began his political career as secretary to his father, former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone. He served as Minister of Education and Minister of State for Science and Technology, in the Mori Administration, and has chaired Upper House committees on Commerce and Industry, Women's Issues, and Rules and

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Administration. He has also served as LDP policy chief in the Upper House. Apart from his close relationship with Aso as a fellow member of the education policy clique within the LDP, Embassy contacts speculate that he may have been chosen for his name recognition overseas, and his "bullet-proof" status as a member of the Upper House. One contact regarded his appointment a move to insulate foreign policy from domestic considerations. Nakasone speaks English.

¶9. (C) MINISTER OF FINANCE and MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES: Shoichi Nakagawa, 55, is an eight-term member of the Lower House of the Diet, representing Hokkaido district 8. Most recently Chairman of the LDP Policy Research Council under PM Abe (2006-07), he previously served as Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (2005-06 and 1998-99) and Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry (2003-05). First elected to the Diet in 1983, Nakagawa was a strong proponent of trade deals as METI minister, despite opposition from the agriculture sector. Nakagawa has advocated increased spending and tax cuts and recently wrote in a newspaper article that, "We're not in a situation where we can stick to the goal of restoring a primary surplus by fiscal 2011. (I)f the surplus is attained at the expense of the Japanese economy sinking, we'll be the laughing stock of the world." Prior to following his father Ichiro Nakagawa into politics, Nakagawa worked at Mizuho Financial Group from 1978 to 1983, following his graduation from Tokyo University.

In April 2004 the media reported Nakagawa's failure to pay public pension premiums for 21 years, which he characterized as inadvertent. He is also known for his conservative views.

In a 2007 interview, he stated, "Women have their proper place: they should be womanly. They have their own abilities and these should be fully exercised, for example in flower arranging, sewing, or cooking."

¶10. (C) MINISTER OF DEFENSE: Yasukazu HAMADA, 52, is a fifth-term member of the Lower House representing Chiba 12th District, first elected in 1994. Hamada does not formally belong to any faction, but has been a long-time vocal supporter of Prime Minister Aso. Hamada is a core member of

the LDP's defense caucus, having served in key security posts both in the ruling party and Lower House Security Committee. Hamada was a parliamentary Vice Minister of Defense in the second Koizumi Cabinet. Hamada is a strong supporter of "normalizing" Japan's defense policies and has often expressed frustration to the Embassy over Tokyo's steady stream of "excuses" for not playing a more equal role in the Alliance, including in out-of-area operations. He headed the Diet's Iraq Friendship League, and has supported a more active Japanese presence in Iraq, according to Iraq's Ambassador to Japan. He also strongly advocates relaxing Japan's arms export restrictions in order to deepen cooperation between the U.S. and Japanese defense industrial bases. Hamada is well-versed on Alliance Transformation issues. Hamada's father was a powerful - and corrupt -- LDP political operator. Hamada, by contrast, is viewed as a policy wonk with limited weight within the party. Hamada's influence is likely to benefit from his close personal ties to the Prime Minister. Hamada was an exchange student at Michigan's Hillsdale College, but speaks little English. His hobbies include golf.

¶11. (C) MINISTER OF ECONOMY, TRADE, AND INDUSTRY (METI): Toshihiro NIKAI, 69, is an eight-term member of the Lower House of the Diet from Wakayama's 3rd District, first elected in 1983. Nikai has his own 16-member faction and previously served in the same post in the Fukuda cabinet. He is known for his pro-China stance and was a member of the parliamentary league that supported the Beijing Olympics. During a previous stint at METI under former PM Koizumi (2006-06), Nikai put forth a plan for Asian regional integration based on an "ASEAN Plus 6" model. At the same time, he was the impetus behind Japan's proposal to set up the Economic Research Institute for East Asia (ERIA), which recently began operating at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta. Although Nikai has been a Diet member since 1983, he left the

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LDP in 1993 and was a founder of the Japan Renewal Party (Shinsei-to) with current Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) President Ichiro Ozawa. Nikai, together with Ozawa, later joined the New Frontier Party headed by former Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa. After the collapse of the Hosokawa Cabinet, Nikai was associated with a number of smaller parties, including a stint as Ozawa's senior deputy when Ozawa headed the Liberal Party in the late 1990's. Nikai returned to the LDP in 2003. Due to his experience in both ruling and opposition parties, he is known as a deft behind-the-scenes political negotiator, with strong connections to both coalition and ruling parties. He is credited with playing a key role in the LDP's landslide victory in September 2005. Nikai's other cabinet-level assignments have included a term as Director General of the Hokkaido Development Agency, Minister of Transportation, and Minister in charge of International Exhibitions. Nikai is a graduate of Chuo University's well-regarded undergraduate law program, and before entering national politics served as secretary to then Construction Minister Saburo Endo. He also served as a Wakayama prefectural assembly member for two terms. Nikai is married with children. He does not speak English.

¶12. (C) MINISTER OF JUSTICE: Eisuke MORI, 60, is a six-term member of the Lower House representing Chiba 11th district and a member of the Aso faction of the LDP. First elected in 1990, this is his first appointment as a cabinet minister. Since becoming a member of the Lower House, he has worked mainly on health, labor and welfare issues. He served as Parliamentary Secretary for Labor in 1994 and Senior Vice Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare in 2003. Within the LDP, Mori served as Executive Deputy Secretary General in 2005, and currently holds positions as Chairman of the Research Committee on Electric and Nuclear Power Plant Production and Deputy Chairman of the Diet Affairs Committee. He has a Ph.D. in engineering from Nagoya University with a concentration in welding technology for nuclear power plants.

Mori comes from a long line of politicians. His father, Yoshihide Mori was an LDP Lower House member and Director General of the Environmental Agency in the second Nakasone Administration. His grandfather, Nobuteru Mori, was also a member of the Lower House and a founder of the Mori Group. He is related to former Prime Minister Takeo Miki through marriage. Mori's wife Yoko is an attorney and they have a son and a daughter. He is a member of the board of Tamagawa University and International Budo University. He is an adherent of the Nichiren Buddhist sect and his hobbies include reading, listening to music, and cooking. He does not speak English.

¶13. (C) MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES (MAFF): Shigeru ISHIBA, 51, is a seventh-term member of the Lower House representing Tottori's first district, first elected in 1986. A member of the Tsushima faction, he is a second generation Diet member, and served twice as Minister of State for Defense. Prior to his recent concentration on defense issues, he developed considerable expertise on agriculture, serving as Parliamentary Vice Minister for Agriculture (1992) and MAFF Senior State Secretary (2000). Ishiba was known for a relatively international perspective on agricultural policy, favoring strengthening agricultural import policies rather than increasing self-sufficiency as the best way to assure food security. Other key positions included support for direct payments to less competitive farmers, rather than more market-distorting policies, and opposition to protecting sensitive sectors with tariffs. The Japan Foodservice Association has been an important supporter. In his capacity as Defense Minister, he was a strong proponent of the U.S.-Japan security alliance and had contact with many high-level USG officials. Ishiba left the LDP for four years with Ozawa to form the New Frontier Party (Shinshinto), before returning to the LDP. He graduated from Keio University and started his career in banking before entering politics. Ishiba is married, with two daughters, and his hobby is reading.

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¶14. (C) Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT): Nariaki NAKAYAMA, 65, is a sixth-term member of the Lower House representing Miyazaki 1 district, first elected in 1986. He belongs to the Machimura faction. Nakayama served as Education Minister in the Koizumi Administration and has previous experience as a Senior Vice Minister at METI during the Mori Administration. Nakayama has broad experience and is well-versed on issues to include: finance, agriculture, defense and education. A graduate of Tokyo University, Nakayama started his career at the Ministry of Finance where he spent about 15 years and met his wife. Nakayama served as head of the Finance Budget Bureau and also spent three years in Washington at the World Bank before joining the LDP and entering politics. Nakayama is married to former Minister of State for Abduction Issues, Kyoko Nakayama, well known for her conservative views. His hobbies include reading, the game Go, and the martial arts Karate and Aikido.

¶15. (C) MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNICATIONS -- Kunio HATOYAMA, 60, is a tenth-term member of the Lower House representing Fukuoka sixth district, first elected in 1976, and is a member of the Tsushima faction. He is personally close to PM Aso and has previously served as Minister of Justice (2007-08), Minister of Labor (1994), and Minister of Education (1991-92). Kunio Hatoyama is grandson of former PM and first LDP president Ichiro Hatoyama, son of former Foreign Minister Ichiro Hatoyama, and younger brother of Yukio Hatoyama, currently Secretary General of the opposition DPJ. Hatoyama's first political job was as secretary to former PM Kakuei Tanaka. He left the LDP in 1993 to become an independent, and was instrumental in forming the New Frontier Party (Shinshinto) and, in 1996, the early DPJ. Hatoyama left the DPJ and ran unsuccessfully for Tokyo governor in 1999, returned to the LDP in the 2000 lower house

election, and attempted unsuccessfully to run in the LDP presidential election in 2006. As Justice Minister, Hatoyama made controversial remarks on the death penalty when he suggested eliminating the need for ministerial signature of an execution order. A month later, in October 2007, he again caused controversy when he sought to justify a plan to fingerprint and photograph foreigners by questioning GOJ immigration controls. He made an unsubstantiated comment, for which he later apologized, about a "friend of a friend" in al-Qaeda who had been involved in the Bali bombing and was able to sneak into Japan. Hatoyama graduated from the University of Tokyo, Faculty of Law, is married to Emily Takami, a well-known TV entertainer, and has two sons and a daughter. He maintains interests in the environment and animal protection, and his hobbies include the study of butterflies, cooking and gardening. He speaks some English but uses an interpreter in official meetings.

¶16. (C) MINISTER OF EDUCATION, CULTURE, SPORTS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (MEXT): Ryu SHIONOYA, 56. a first-time cabinet minister, is a five-term member of the Lower House representing Shizuoka 8 district. He was first elected in 1990 and is a member of the Machimura faction of the LDP. Shionoya served as Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary in the second Fukuda Cabinet, Senior Vice Minister of MEXT in 2004, and Parliamentary Secretary of Internal Affairs and Communications in 1995. Within the LDP, he was Deputy Chairman of the Policy Research Council in 2007, Deputy Chairman of the Diet Affairs Committee in 2005, and Director for Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in ¶2003. A law graduate of Keio University, Shionoya studied at Ambassador College in California as an undergraduate. His father, Kazuo Shionoya, was also a member of the Lower House and served as Parliamentary Vice Minister for Labor in 1972. Shionoya is married and has a son and a daughter. His hobbies include traveling, watching sports, and playing golf. He speaks English.

¶17. (C) MINISTER OF HEALTH, LABOR, AND WELFARE (MHLW): Yoichi MASUZOE, 59, remains as MHLW minister. A second-term

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member of the Upper House proportional representation block, Masuzoe was first elected in 2001 and is not affiliated with any LDP faction. Since he joined the Diet, he has shown interest in reform of the pension, civil service, and education systems, in addition to espousing child-rearing support and amendment of the constitution. Masuzoe has also been vocal about issues related to Japan's aging population. Masuzoe's popularity has been dented, but has remained relatively high compared to other cabinet ministers, as he has weathered the government's continuing problems with matching garbled pension records to their rightful owners, a series of food safety scandals, and the fallout from a policy change that raised medical costs for seniors. Previously, Masuzoe has served as Chairman of the LDP Policy Board in the Upper House, as well as Director of the Committee on Financial Affairs and the Committee on Discipline of the Upper House. A graduate of the University of Tokyo, Masuzoe worked as an Associate Professor of International Relations at Tokyo University, specializing in French politics and diplomacy as well as international relations. His book on welfare issues, his political commentary, and frequent television appearances have given him wide name recognition. Masuzoe is married without children. His second wife, Satsuki Katayama, is a first-term member of the LDP Lower House representing Shizuoka seventh district. Masuzoe's hobbies include horseback riding, golf, and skiing; he has a black belt in judo. He speaks excellent English and French, having been a visiting fellow at the University of Paris and the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, and was an engaging interlocutor during the May 2008 G8 Labor and Employment Ministers' Meeting.

¶18. (C) MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT: Tetsuo SAITO, 56, retained the post of Environment Minister from his appointment to the

second Fukuda cabinet. He is a five-term member of the Lower House of the Diet, representing the Chugoku proportional-representation constituency, and was first elected in 1993. He belongs to the New Komeito party. As Environment Minister, his initial comments on climate change went beyond the administration's stated policy by saying Japan and other developed nations should adopt a mid-term target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 25 percent by 2025.

MOE officials told the Embassy Saito was "confused with the New Komeito party policy," and that Japan would announce a mid-term target at an appropriate time in 2009, as envisioned by the PM Fukuda. While in the Diet, Saito has worked on an array of issues such as education, culture, science and technology, and energy, but he never specialized in environmental policy. He previously served as Parliamentary Secretary of Science and Technology (1999), Chair of the Standing Committee on Education and Science of the Lower House (twice in 2004 and 2006) and currently serves as Chair of New Komeito's Policy Affairs Research Council. Saito has addressed the Diet over 180 times and was involved in establishing the Basic Law on Science and Technology Advancement and the Basic Law on Culture and Art Advancement.

Recently, Saito was very active in addressing the energy crisis and requested emergency measures against oil price increases in June 2008. Saito has a Ph.D. in engineering from the Tokyo Institute of Technology and previously worked as a researcher for the Shimizu Corporation, a leading architectural, engineering and general contracting firm. Saito is married, with three daughters. He is a railroad enthusiast and enjoys traveling by train. Although he was a visiting researcher at Princeton University from 1986 to 1989, he is not fluent in English, according to his staff.

119. (C) NATIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION CHAIRMAN and MINISTER OF STATE FOR NORTHERN TERRITORIES AND OKINAWA AFFAIRS: Tsutomu SATO, is a fourth-term Lower House member representing the fourth district in Tochigi Prefecture. Elected to the Diet first in 1996, Sato, a first-time Minister, belongs to the Koga faction and most of his experience is in the telecommunications field. Most recently the Senior Vice Minister at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication under Prime Ministers Fukuda and Abe, Sato

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was the Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Labor and Welfare in the second Koizumi Cabinet. He was the ranking member of the Lower House Committee on Internal Affairs and Communication in 2000 and served as the Committee Chairman in 12006. Sato appears to have good relations with Aso, developed during Aso's September 2003 to October 2005 tenure as Minister of Internal Affairs and Communication. Sato and Aso play golf together on a regular basis. An Embassy contact suggested that as Sato is rumored to have questionable connections with local construction companies in Tochigi, his appointment would be short term and is an indication that Aso plans an early election.

120. (C) MINISTER OF STATE FOR ECONOMIC AND FISCAL POLICY: Kaoru YOSANO, 69, retains his position in the Cabinet. He is a nine-term member of the Lower House of the Diet representing Tokyo 1 district. He was first elected in 1976 and served as the Minister of State for Economic and Fiscal Policy and Financial Services in 2005 prior to becoming Chief Cabinet Secretary for one month in 2007. He is not a member of any faction. Yosano is a rare LDP "justice-tribe" member and also a well-known specialist on economic and fiscal policy, having also served as chairman of the LDP Research Commission on the Tax System. He is a strong advocate of fiscal reconstruction through tax increases, which he advocated while competing with Aso for the prime ministership. As LDP Policy Research Council chairman in 2004, Yosano pushed forward former PM Koizumi's postal privatization initiative. Yosano started his political career as secretary to then Diet member and future Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone.

¶21. (C) MINISTER OF STATE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM: Akira AMARI, 59, who replaces Sadakazu Tanigaki as head of MLIT, is an eight-term member of the Lower House, representing Kanagawa District thirteen, the site of a number of US bases.

The son of a former Lower House Diet member, he belongs to the Yamazaki Faction of the LDP and served as Labor Minister (1998) in the cabinet of the late Prime Minister Obuchi and Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) under Prime Minister Abe (2006-07). Prior to his appointment as METI Minister, he played the role of Acting Chairman of the LDP's Policy Research Council. In the Diet, Amari has specialized in issues related to commerce and industry, having served for a long time on the Party's Committee on Organizations Involved with Commerce, Industry, and Medium and Small Enterprises, including as chairman. Amari is a graduate of Keio University and worked for two-and-a-half years at Sony Corporation. He then became his father's personal secretary for nine years before being elected to the Diet himself in ¶1983. During his tenure in the first Abe Cabinet, Amari did little to change the general impression that he is an "old-fashioned" Diet member likely to follow the lead of the bureaucrats in the Ministry. Although Amari publicly expressed support for resuscitating the Doha Round negotiations in the WTO, he did little to offer new proposals or otherwise assert Japanese leadership in the process. Amari prefers to use an interpreter in meetings with U.S. officials.

¶22. (C) MINISTER OF STATE FOR CONSUMER ADMINISTRATION, AND FOOD SAFETY: Seiko NODA, 47, is a fifth-term member of the Lower House of the Diet. First elected in 1993, she was ousted from the party in 2005 as a "postal rebel" for failing to support then-Prime Minister Koizumi's reform initiative, only to return again in December 2006 after pledging to support the reform program. Noda was Minister for Posts and Communications in the first Obuchi cabinet in 1998 at the age of 37 and at that time had been considered a Diet member with good prospects to become the first female Prime Minister. She has worked most recently as Chair of the LDP's Research Commission on Consumer Issues, creating the legal framework for Prime Minister Fukuda's proposed Consumer Agency. In a meeting with Embassy officials, she described working closely with PM Fukuda on plans for the Consumer Agency, which she called his favorite policy project. Shortly after Fukuda's

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resignation, Noda told the media she was feeling uneasy about the Agency's prospects because of a relative lack of interest among lawmakers. Her grandfather is former Minister of Construction Uichi Noda. She spent some years at Jonesville High School in Michigan, and her hobbies include reading books, watching movies and karaoke.

¶23. (C) MINISTER OF STATE FOR DECLINING BIRTHRATE: Yuko OBUCHI, 34, is a three-term member of the Lower House representing Gunma 5 district and a member of the Tsushima faction of the LDP. First elected in 2000, this is her first appointment as a Cabinet minister. She is the youngest Cabinet member in the post-War period. Since becoming a member of the Lower House, he has worked mainly on health, labor and welfare issues. Obuchi was born in Tokyo, and worked in broadcasting for two years after her graduation from Seijo University. A third-generation politician, her father was the late Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi. She was elected to fill his seat shortly after his death, and is extremely popular. Several contacts described her as the only "star" of the new Cabinet, in terms of popular appeal. Obuchi speaks English, having studied abroad, and just gave birth to a son last year.

BIO INFO FOR NEW PARTY LEADERS

¶24. (C) LDP SECRETARY GENERAL: Hiroyuki HOSODA, 64, six-term Lower House member and second-generation politician who has

represented Shimane 1 district since 1990. Hosoda's appointment comes as something of a surprise, but one LDP insider speculates that his elevation to the top party job is part of a conscious effort by Aso to maintain the current power balance within the party and Hosoda's Machimura faction. A 20-year veteran of the Trade Ministry, the 64-year-old Hosoda served as Director of the Washington office of the Japan National Oil Corporation from 1983-1985. Since entering politics, he has served as Chief Cabinet Secretary under former PM Koizumi in 2004, and as Minister of State for Okinawa and Northern Territories Affairs, and Science and Technology Policy in 2002. His stint as Election Bureau chief in 2001 obviously enhances his credentials.

¶25. (C) LDP GENERAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL (GAC) CHAIRMAN: Takashi SASAGAWA, 72, is a seven-term member of the Lower House of the Diet representing the Gunma 2 district. He was first elected in 1986, and belongs to the Tsushima faction led by Yuji Tsushima, former Health and Welfare Minister. Sasagawa specializes in women and children's issues, especially on the promotion of dual surnames and the zero-waiting list at nursery schools. Sasagawa is no stranger to his new position, having served as acting GAC Chairman twice and GAC Vice Chairman twice. In addition, he has also been Chairman of the Rules and Administration Committee and served in such posts as State Minister for Science and Technology, Lower House Budget Committee Chairman, and Judicial Affairs Committee Chairman. The second son of Ryoichi Sasagawa, a Class A war criminal and founder of the Japan Motorboat Racing Association, his first job was with the motorboat racing association. Sasagawa once left the LDP in 1994 to join the Group of Reform and then the New Frontier Party, but returned to the LDP in 1997. Sasagawa's wife, Yoshie, passed away in 1996. He has 5 sons. His hobbies include golf, baseball, and motor sports in general. He left Meiji University without a diploma. He speaks no English.

¶26. (C) LDP POLICY RESEARCH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN: Kosuke HORI, 73, is a ten-term member of the Lower House of the Diet, representing the Saga 3 district, and was first elected in 1979. He is not affiliated with any faction of the party. Eldest son of former Lower House Speaker Shigeru Hori, he specializes in agricultural issues and is in favor of protecting Japan's agricultural market. A Keio University graduate, Hori has served as Education Minister, Home Affairs Minister, National Public Safety Commission Chairman, and as

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Chairman of the LDP Research Commission on Comprehensive Agricultural Administration. He voted against the postal privatization bill under the Koizumi Cabinet and was expelled from the LDP, but successfully won the 2005 election as an independent running against an LDP candidate. Hori was subsequently reinstated into the party in 2006 by Prime Minister Abe. He is known as an "old conservative" and as a sincere and polite maverick. His hobbies include "go," golf, and photography. He speaks no English.

¶27. (C) LDP ELECTION STRATEGY COUNCIL CHAIRMAN: Makoto KOGA, 67, is a nine-term member of the Lower House of the Diet, representing Fukuoka 7 district, and was first elected in 1980. He is retaining his position as Election Strategy Council Chairman, to which he was appointed in 2007 after Fukuda became Prime Minister. His position was seen as tenuous, given his history of strained ties with Aso and opposition to Aso in the recent LDP election. He heads his own faction of 62 members. Known as "Don of the Road Tribe," Koga specializes in road administration and is skilled at managing party and Diet politics, having served in such key posts as Minister of Transportation, LDP Diet Affairs Committee Chairman, and LDP Secretary General. He is not from a political family and started his political career as a secretary to an Upper House LDP member. Koga was considered "anti-reform" during the administrations of former Prime Ministers Koizumi and Abe, but with their departure he was returned to a position of leadership by Fukuda. Known as a

leading liberal voice in the LDP, Koga is Chairman of the Japan War-Bereaved Association and has advocated the dis-enshrinement of Class A war criminals from the Yasukuni Shrine. He is not an expert on foreign or national security matters, but has cultivated strong relationships with Chinese leaders through his mentor and former LDP Secretary General Hiromu Nonaka. A graduate of Nihon University, Koga speaks no English. He is married and has one son. Koga may be unhappy with the appointment of Aso as Secretary General because the two dislike each other. Nevertheless, they do cooperate when it advances their own interests to do so.

SCHIEFFER